

2024 BROWN SWCD ACCOMPLISHMENTS ANNUAL REPORT

The Brown SWCD completed or participated in the following projects and activities throughout 2024.

EDUCATION & PROMOTION

- Co-hosted the Lamberton stop of the Highway 14 Tour – CLASIC with area partners
- Booth at the Farm Show event in New Ulm hosted by Farm-City Hub Club
- SWCD presentation at the Sleepy Eye General Federation of Women’s Club
- Booth at the Family Night on the Dairy Farm event
- Booth at Farmfest in cooperation with Area 5 and 6 SWCDs
- Direct mailings to landowners in the Watonwan River Watershed promoting funding opportunities
- MASWCD newsletter article featuring easement acres and habitat benefits within our county during October to coincide with the Governor’s Pheasant Opener event being held in Sleepy Eye
- Monthly KNUJ radio spot presentations on Aquatic Invasive Species Program, RIM/CREP Easement Program, Tree Program, Cost Share Program, Soil Health Program and other district activities
- News Releases/SWCD Website Posts/Facebook Posts about the Tree Program, Hwy 14 Tour, MAWQCP, WIA, Stewardship Week, AIS Prevention, Watonwan Watershed Funding, Supervisor Elections, LWG meeting, Cottonwood-Middle MN Public Hearing Meeting, and Soil Health

COST SHARE PROJECTS

- Performed 13 site visits to assess resource concerns and provide project options
- Project Completed – Stately 32, Grassed Waterway
- Project Completed – Albin 14, WASCOB (x2)
- Project Completed – Lake Hanska 32, WASCOB (x2)
- Project Completed – Leavenworth 15, Grassed Waterway
- Project Completed – North Home 29, Grade Stabilization
- Project Completed – Leavenworth 21, Grassed Waterway
- Project Completed – Stately 5, Grassed Waterway
- Project Completed – Albin 26, Cover Crop, 68 acres, Year 2 of 3
- Project Completed – Stately 30, Cover Crop, 17 acres, Year 1 of 3
- Project Completed – Stately 22, Cover Crop, 30.5 acres, Year 1 of 3
- Project Completed – Stately 30, Weed Management (leafy spurge), 49 acres
- Project Completed – Stately 31, Weed Management (leafy spurge), 50 acres

SOIL HEALTH PROGRAM

- Awarded a \$200,000 grant from BWSR called ‘Brown SWCD Building Soil Health Network’ that will fund a .5 FTE staff member from July 2024 through December 2027 to build a soil health network within our county and implement soil health projects with landowners
- Began developing partnerships with NRCS, Minnesota Soil Health Coalition, local ag-based businesses and local producers already implementing soil health practices within operations
- Attended applicable trainings and workshops to work towards Cover Crop JAA certification
- Attended soil health events to further knowledge and to begin building a soil health network

EASEMENT APPLICATIONS APPROVED FOR FUNDING

- MN CREP: Wetland Restoration – Home 34, 10.03 acres
- MN CREP: Wetland Restoration – Mulligan 29, 74.80 acres
- RIM Riparian & Floodplain Restoration: Stately 10, 37.50 acres
- RIM Riparian & Floodplain Restoration: North Star 17, 14.30 acres

EASEMENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

- Wetland Restoration Completed – Mulligan 2/11
- Wetland Restoration Completed – Mulligan 29
- Wetland Restoration Completed – Mulligan 36

EASEMENTS PROGRAM PROGRESS

- Completed application processing and easement recording of 2 projects
- Began application processing of 4 newly funded projects
- Monitored seeding establishment on 24 sites and completed seeding on 2 new sites
- Received approval for 1 easement enhancement project

BUFFER PROGRAM

- Maintained records on BuffCAT, landowner files, and internal excel database
- Provided technical assistance to landowners to help them maintain compliance
- Completed annual compliance monitoring on 1,353 parcels
- Buffer compliance rate of 98.1% in Brown County as of 12/31/2024

AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION

- Attended AIS workshops and meetings hosted by DNR
- Attended local sportsman’s club and/or lake association meetings to continue partnerships
- Installed an Aqua Weed Stick Station and a curly-leaf pondweed sign at Sleepy Eye Lake
- Installed waterfowl based AIS Prevention signs at 7 Wildlife Management Areas
- Installed new ‘Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers’ signs at 4 public water accesses
- Partnered with 6 local bait shops for the DNR sponsored Bait-Sellers Program
- Volunteered at the U of M ‘Starry Trek’ monitoring event on Lake Hanska
- Promoted AIS Prevention through radio ads on KNUJ, streaming radio ads, digital media ads, Lindner Media/Angling Buzz, MN Traditions social media project, monthly radio spots on KNUJ, SWCD website and Facebook posts, and handing out promotional materials at public water accesses or local events

WATERSHED PLANNING

- Completed the watershed planning process with watershed partners through an approved planning grant to develop a comprehensive watershed plan for the Cottonwood-Middle MN River Watershed

OTHER PROGRAMS

- Tree Sales (50 Customers, 3,985 Trees Sold)
- Observation Well Monitoring Program (13)
- Rain Gauge Program (9 active readers)
- RIM Program Annual Site Checks (141)
- RIM Program Haying Agreements (9)
- MAWQCP Program (4 certified landowners)
- Walk-In Access Program (11 active contracts)
- RIM Program Ownership Changes (9)
- RIM Program Conservation Plan Changes (3)
- Wetlands Conservation Act TEP Panel Member

ORGANIZATION REPRESENTATION AND/OR SUPPORT

- Brown County
- USDA- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)
- Greater Blue Earth River Basin Alliance
- Redwood Cottonwood Rivers Control Area
- Minnesota River Congress
- Minnesota DNR
- Ducks Unlimited Climate-Smart Partnership
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- USDA- Farm Service Agency
- South Central Technical Service Area
- MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD)
- MASWCD Area VI Association
- MN Soil Health Coalition
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Pheasants Forever
- University of Minnesota Extension
- MN Association of Conservation District Employees